

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 IO-13 DEAE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07
JUSE-00 NSAE-00 SNM-02 TRSE-00 USIA-06 NSC-05
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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY
SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3583
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 4947

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, AF, UR
SUBJECT: OPIUM CULTIVATION ON SOVIET PROJECT LANDS IN
AFGHANISTAN

REF: A) MOSCOW 9302; B) STATE 150736 (NOTAL) C) MOSCOW 9444
(NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. THIS EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT A
BILATERAL APPROACH SHOULD BE MADE TO THE SOVIETS, ATTEMPT-
ING TO SECURE THEIR COOPERATION IN THE CONTROL OF THE
OPIUM PROBLEM IN AFGHANISTAN. END SUMMARY.

2. RE PARAGRAPH 2 OF REFTEL A, THIS EMBASSY HAS ALWAYS
MAINTAINED THAT THE POINT AT ISSUE IS NOT WHETHER THERE
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IS A DOMESTIC NARCOTICS PROBLEM WITHIN THE USSR -- BUT,
AS NOTED IN PARAGRAPH 5 OF REFTEL A, WHETHER NEW AFGHAN
FARMLANDS WHICH HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED TO CULTIVATION
THROUGH EXPENSIVE SOVIET AID PROJECTS ARE INDEED
BEING MISUSED FOR THE PRODUCTION OF OPIUMPOPPIES INSTEAD
OF CITRUS FRUITS, OLIVES, OR WHATEVER MARKET
CROPS THE THE SOVIETS HAD IN MIND WHEN MAKING THEIR

AID INVESTMENT. (ACCORDING TO THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE, MOST OF THE LEGITIMATE PRODUCE FROM THESE PROJECT AREAS IS RESERVED FOR THE SOVIET DOMESTIC MARKET IN PARTIAL PAYMENT OF THE SIZEABLE DEBT SERVICING CHARGES AFGHANISTAN OWES ITS NORTHERN NEIGHBOR.) ANYONE DRIVING IN THE JALALABAD REGION DURING THE LAST POPPY SEASON COULD SEE EXTENSIVE FIELDS OF POPPIES GROWING IN SOVIET PROJECT AREAS, TAKING THE PLACE OF LEGITIMATE CROPS.

3. THEREFORE, THE EMBASSY STILL BELIEVES THAT THE BEST STRATEGY WOULD BE TO TRY TO CONVINCE THE SOVIETS THAT THEY SHOULD NOT PERMIT SUCH FLAGRANT MISUES OF THEIR APD PROJECTS -- BECAUSE IT DISTORTS THE ORIGINAL STATED PURPOSE OF THEIR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, REDUCING THE POTENTIAL LEGITIMATE PRODUCTION OF THIS VALUABLE AGRICULTURAL REGION -- AND BECAUSE IT DIRECTLY ASSOCIATES THE SOVIET UNION (NOT CHINA, WHICH, INCIDENTALLY, CANNOT BE CREDIBLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE NARCOTICS TRAFFIC IN THIS REGION) WITH A CRIMINAL ACTIVITY OF WORLDWIDE, INTERNATIONAL CONCERN. IN THIS PRIVATE CONTEXT, WE COULD FRANKLY DISCUSS OUR CONCERN OVER SIMILAR OPIUMPRODUCTION PROBLEMS IN OUR OWN PROJECT AREAS -- AND DESCRIBE OUR EFFORTS TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

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4. DEFERRING, OF COURSE, TO THE JUDGMENT OF SOVIET AFFAIRS SPECIALISTS AT EMBASSY MOSCOW AND IN THE DEPARTMENT, IT WOULD APPEAR TO US TO BE PREFERABLE TO ADDRESS THESE ARGUMENTS TO THE SOVIETS PRIVATELY IN A BILATERAL DISCUSSION, INSTEAD OF IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT, AS SUGGESTED IN PARAGRAPH 5 OF REFTEL A. IN THE LATTER FORUM, THE SOVIETS MIGHT ASSUME THAT WE WERE ONLY SEEKING SOME KIND OF PROPAGANDA ADVANTAGE, ALTHOUGH THE CHANCES OF OUR GAINING SOVIET CO-OPERATION ARE ADMITTEDLY SMALL, TWO IMPORTANT GOALS ARE WORTH THE EFFORT: (1) AN EXPRESSION OF CONCERN TO THE AFGHANS BY THEIR MAJOR SUPPLIER OF AID; (2) A POSSIBLE REDUCTION IN THE OPIUM PRODUCTION OF NANGARHAR PROVINCE, A REGION WHICH COULD AGAIN BECOME A MAJOR SOURCE OF THIS DRUG IN THE COMING GROWING SEASON.

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